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2022

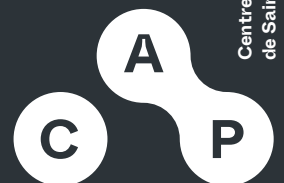
# Brittany Nelson

Press kit

I wish I had  
a dark sea

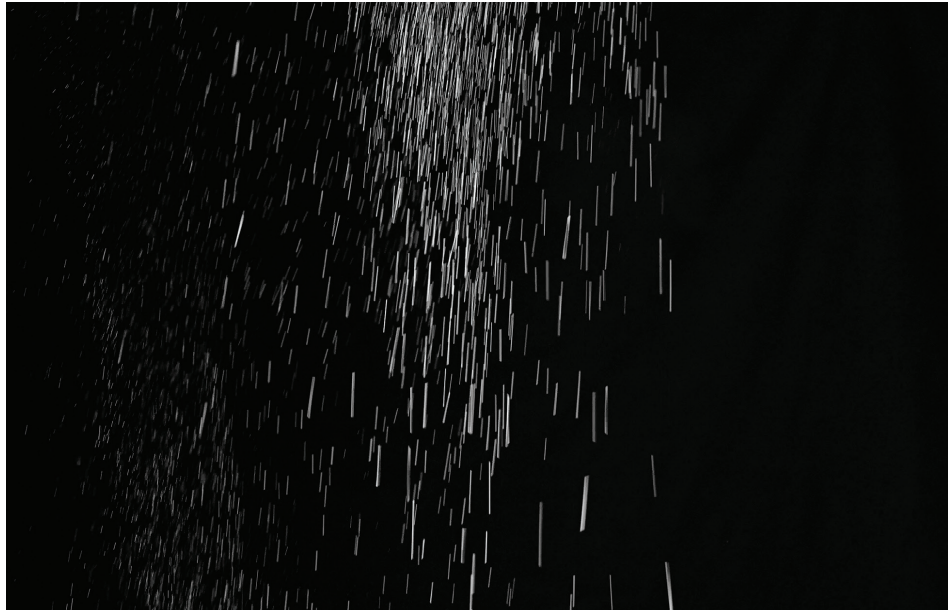
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CAP • ↓ Espace Léon Blum, rue de la Rochette, Saint-Fons



Centre d'art  
de Saint-Fons

## Press release



Brittany Nelson, *I can hardly bear it when it is over, I can hardly bear it when it starts*, Single channel video work, 2022  
© Brittany Nelson and Patron Gallery

# Brittany Nelson

## *I wish I had a dark sea*

### Exhibition

April 2<sup>nd</sup> — May 22<sup>nd</sup>

### Opening

Saturday April 2<sup>nd</sup>  
at 2 p.m.

### Press preview

Friday April 1<sup>st</sup>  
2 — 6 p.m.

The artist appropriates ancient photographic techniques to address the genres of feminist science fiction and queer abstraction.

By focusing on the concept of anomalies in the photographic process, the artist broaches the question of representation, of the photographic ideal and of the representation of reality.

Nelson's works are based on images from NASA's archives, as well as on the stories of writers like Alice B Sheldon - who wrote under a male pseudonym.

The artist presents a landscape combining utopias, space-time travel, science fiction and feminist theories.

The exhibition includes existing works as well as new productions by the American artist, who spent few weeks as artist-in-residence in Saint-Fons in March 2022.

Curator: Alessandra Prandin

PATRON

Brittany Nelson is represented by  
Patron Gallery (Chicago, États-Unis).

## Exhibition 1/2

For her first solo exhibition in France, at the CAP Saint-Fons, the American artist Brittany Nelson will be presenting works from the series *Starbear* and *Tiptree's Dead Birds*, new productions and a new video which will be shown for the first time at the Art Centre. *I wish I had a dark sea* paves the way for the retrospective that will be devoted to her at the Fotogalleriet in Oslo (Norway) in autumn 2022.

The exhibition is built around the figure of Alice B. Sheldon, known under the male pseudonym of James Tiptree – a prolific author of science-fiction novels in the 1970s – who was closeted. Desire, gender identity and the great loneliness hidden behind an alter ego, are at the heart of her correspondence with another successful writer – Ursula LeGuin – for whom Sheldon developed deep and unspoken feelings. For several years, Nelson has been interested in this rich corpus and has conducted research in the vast archives of the feminist science-fiction collection at the University of Oregon. The result is the gelatin silver prints of the *Starbear* series, presented at the CAP in large-format prints, where the artist erases the text to leave only the words of affection intended for LeGuin, like furtive appearances on the photographic surface. In *I wish I had a dark sea*, which gives its title to the exhibition, the artist inverts the image, treating the text as a landscape where words float on a vast black surface, a *dark sea*, a desert inhabited by Sheldon's solitude.

The pages of the writer's notebook emerge from areas of light or shadow in the *Tiptree's Dead Birds* series, where holographic reproduction – an ancient process where refraction and diffraction create optical illusions – gives a new dimension to the text, a depth that is both formal and symbolic. As letters from the past that speak of the future, the holograms bring us still closer to Sheldon's intimate universe. She referred to the women she loved (but who rejected her) as “dead birds,” consolidating the feeling of an unfulfilled desire.

Queer abstraction, SF, the history of photography and the appropriation of images taken from space explorations, coexist and respond to each other in Nelson's work. Science fiction – the place of anticipation – is the place of all possibilities for feminist authors; a space to feed the queer imagination and to draft the story of new ways of life. Brittany Nelson's work is part of this legacy, which challenges a standardized system of producing images and reading the world. Using ancient techniques for the representation of reality, she speaks of the future, be it a NASA probe's solitary wanderings in space or the isolation of a woman forced into a sexual identity that was not her own.

Sheldon's epistolary journey echoes the long journey of the Opportunity rover. In *Opportunity last Image*, a contact sheet print, the artist stages the last image sent by the probe after many years of solitary explorations on Mars (the original mission was only supposed to last three months). This last “breath” of the machine is an incomplete and mysterious image, where the static grey is completed by a black band. Incommunicability, *inadequacy*. End of transmission.

Nelson appropriates the image and reproduces it in different shades of grey and intensities of light, in search of the horizon line of a distant landscape, to detect a message that never reached its destination. The history of photography, metaphor and science-fiction converge in this image, which in itself condenses (the obsessions) and the themes dear to the artist.

## Exhibition 2/2

*Tintype, bromoil, mordantage* are examples of the techniques of Brittany Nelson's universe; they are rare and only practiced today by a handful of experts. Nelson masters these processes, but only to a certain degree; she even alters their course because *it is not enough to resurrect an old technique* - says the artist - *it must be updated and made into something new, relevant (...). I have a deep knowledge of the history of photography and where these techniques come from, and then I decide to ignore it.*

The history of photography, with its scientific protocols, is the ideal terrain to re-examine both the entire tradition of image production and a politics of representation. *My actions are a queering of the material* – insists Nelson, because the introduction of an error, an anomaly into the process is symbolically a refusal to comply with the rule, to work towards its collapse.

In the new video *I can hardly bear when it's over, I can hardly bear when it starts*, the world's largest telescope also collapses into a cloud of dust. The words of Alice Sheldon appear again, an ode to desire and its incommunicability: "I seem to have done all my travelling in countries that no longer exist".

Brittany Nelson's images take us elsewhere, both geographically and temporally, and the photograph – the quintessential witness of the past, *that has been* - is transformed here into a vision of the future.

The Art center warmly thanks Patron Gallery.

We would also like to thank MAC Lyon and Théâtre Jean Marais for the logistic support, Nicolas Garait for the subtitles, Juliet Powys for the translation, Jean-Julien Ney and Guillaume Landron for the installation.

# Biography

**Brittany Nelson**

**Born in 1984 at Great Falls, Montana, USA.**

**Lives and works in Trondheim, Norway .**

Brittany Nelson explores 19th-century photographic chemistry techniques and science fiction to address themes of loneliness, isolation, and distance within the queer community and its parallels with space exploration. She is the recipient of a Creative Capital Foundation Grant in Visual Arts (New York, NY) and a Theo Westenberger Foundation Grant for advancing women in the arts (New York, NY). Her work has been exhibited at Bonniers Konsthall (Stockholm, Sweden), Die Ecke (Santiago, Chile), Sonnenstube (Lugano, Switzerland), The Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (Detroit, MI), The Brooklyn Academy of Music (New York, NY), The Cranbrook Art Museum (Bloomfield Hills, MI), The Newcomb Art Museum (New Orleans, LA), The International Print Center (New York, NY), among many others.

She has an upcoming solo show at Fotogalleriet in Oslo, Norway in 2022. Her monograph "Out Of The Everywhere" was released in 2019 by Mousse Publishing (Milan, Italy), and her sculptural book "Monuments to the Conquerors of Space" was released in 2017 and published by Small Editions (New York, NY). Her work has been featured in publications such as Art in America, Frieze and The New Yorker.

**Web:** [www.brittanynelson.com](http://www.brittanynelson.com)

**Instagram:** @thebrittanynelson



# Curriculum vitae <sup>1/2</sup>

## Selected solo exhibitions

2022

**Meet Me At Infinity**, Fotogalleriet, Oslo, Norway

**I Wish I Had a Dark Sea**, CAP Centre d'art, Saint-Fons, France

2021

**Beam Us Home**, Reynolds Gallery, Richmond, VA

2020

**The Starry Rift**, curated by Stefanie Hessler, Die Ecke, Santiago, Chile

2019

**10,000 Light Years From Home**, Patron Gallery, Chicago, IL

2018

**Warm Worlds and Otherwise**, Harnett Museum of Art, Richmond, VA  
**Science Fictions**, curated by Nicole Kaack, Crush Curatorial, New York, NY (with Gabriela Vainsencher, accompanying publication)

2017

**Related Field**, Reynolds Gallery, Richmond, VA  
**Monuments**, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA

2016

**The Year I Make Contact**, Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York, NY  
**Controller**, Patron Gallery, Chicago, IL  
**Alternative Process**, David Klein Gallery, Detroit, MI  
**Monuments to the Conquerors of Space**, Sadie Halie Projects, Minneapolis, MN

## Selected group exhibitions

2021

**Everywhere and Here**, Artspace New Haven in collaboration with the Peabody Museum, Yale University New Haven, CT

2020

**Shapeshifters**, Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI  
**An Infinite and Omnivorous Sky**, curated by Kendra Paitz, University Galleries of Illinois State University, Normal, IL

2019

**Urania**, curated by Zoë De Luca, Sonnenstube, Lugano, Switzerland  
**Cosmological Arrows**, Bonniers Konsthall, curated by Caroline Elgh, Stockholm, Sweden  
**Parallels and Peripheries**, curated by Larry Ossei-Mensah, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit, MI  
**Pulled In Brooklyn**, International Print Center New York, curated by Roberta Waddell and Samantha Rippner, New York, NY

2017

**Unfamiliar Again: Contemporary Women Abstractionists**, Newcomb Art Museum, New Orleans, LA  
New Geometry, Susquehanna Art Museum, Harrisburg, PA  
**Out of the Ether**, True/False Film Festival with Sager Braudis Gallery, Columbia, MO

2016

**New Photography: Next Wave Art**, curated by Holly Shen, Brooklyn Academy of Music, curated by Holly Shen, Brooklyn, NY  
**Surface of Things**, Houston Center of Photography, Houston, TX

## Artist books

2019

**Out of the Everywhere**, Mousse Publishing, Milan Italy. Edited by Stefanie Hessler, new texts from Lars Bang Larsen, Quinn Latimer, Stefanie Hessler, script by Gordon Hall, with original artworks Danielle Dean, Gala Porras Kim. Designed by Lauren Thorson of Studio-Set

2018

**Monuments**, risograph printed publication, edition of 100, published by Small Editions, New York, NY

2017

**Monuments to the Conquerors of Space**, Halochrome and Gelatin Silver prints bound in a sculptural book, Edition of 3, published by Small Editions, New York, NY

## Selected public collections

**Trondheim Kunstmuseum**, Trondheim, Norway  
**Nasher Museum of Art**, Durham, NC  
**Cranbrook Art Museum**, Bloomfield Hills, MI  
**Virginia Museum of Fine Art**, Richmond, VA

## Selected library book collections

**The Museum of Modern Art**, New York, NY  
**The Center For Book Arts**, New York, NY  
**Tucker Boatwright Library**, Special Collections, University of Richmond, Richmond, VA  
**University of Colorado Boulder Libraries**, Special Collections, Boulder, CO

# Curriculum vitae <sup>2/2</sup>

## Selected grants, residencies and awards

2021

**SETI** (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) Artist in Residence, in collaboration with the Carl Sagan Center, Mountain View, CA  
**Peabody Museum at Harvard and Artspace New Haven**, new art commission, New Haven, CT

2017

**Headlands Center for the Arts**, Artist in Residence, Sausalito, CA

2016

**Theo Westenberger Foundation Grant**, New York, NY  
**Teton Art Lab**, Artist in Residence, Jackson, WY

## Biography - reviews, press and interviews, catalogues, publishing and writing

2019

**Lauren DeLand** "For Artist Brittany Nelson, Space is a Queer, Lonely Place." **Frieze**, Review, October 2019 Issue

**Jeremy Lybarger**, "Brittany Nelson Puts A Sci-Fi Spin On Closeted Gay Life." **Art In America**, Review, September 2019 Issue, pp 101-102

**Caroline Elgh**, "Science Fiction as a Mirror of our Times and Imaginary Laboratory", **Kosmologiska Pillar (Cosmological Arrows)**, Catalogue, Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden, pg 13, 19, 94 – 101.

2018

"Spotlighted Artists," **The Focal Press Companion to the Constructed Image In Contemporary Photography**, Focal Press Books, edited by Anne Leighton Massoni and Marni Shindelman, October

2016

**Clare DeGalan**, "Brittany Nelson and Susan Campbell at David Klein Gallery," **Detroit Art Review**, November, 20

**Kate Hadley Toftness**, "Mika Horibuchi and Brittany Nelson at Patron," **New Art Examiner**, Volume 31 No. 1, September/October, print, pp 29-30

**Vince Aletti**, "Brittany Nelson," **The New Yorker**, February 8 and 15, Anniversary Issue, print

**Brian Fee**, "Interview with Brittany Nelson, Exhibiting with Morgan Lehman Gallery." **Aesthetica Magazine**, February 28, online

**Joshua Barone**, "LGBT Gallery Tour," Spare Times, **New York Times**, February 11

**Jean Dykstra**, "Chemical Peel: Brittany Nelson at Morgan Lehman Gallery, NYC," **BurnAway**, February 1, online

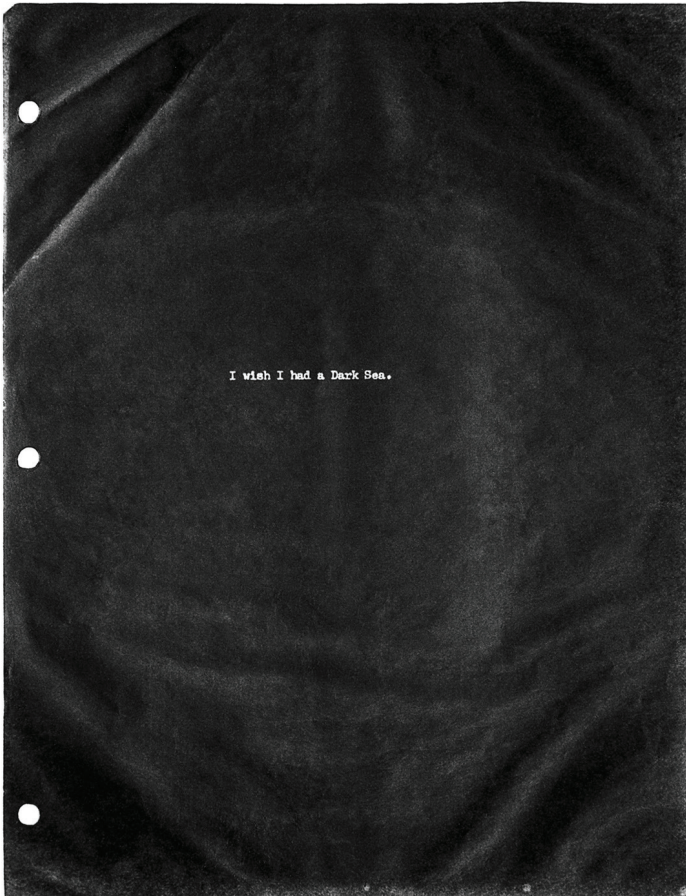
**Taylor Glascock**, "Developing Photos Is Way More Fun If It's Kinda Dangerous," **Wired**, January 21, online

**Loring Knoblauch**, "Brittany Nelson: The Year I Make Contact at Morgan Lehman," **Collector Daily**, January 21, online

**Fernando Sandoval**, "Brittany Nelson at Morgan Lehman Gallery," **Musée**, January 13, online

"Brittany Nelson's First Solo Show with Morgan Lehman Gallery Opens In New York," **ArtDaily**, January, online

# Pictures



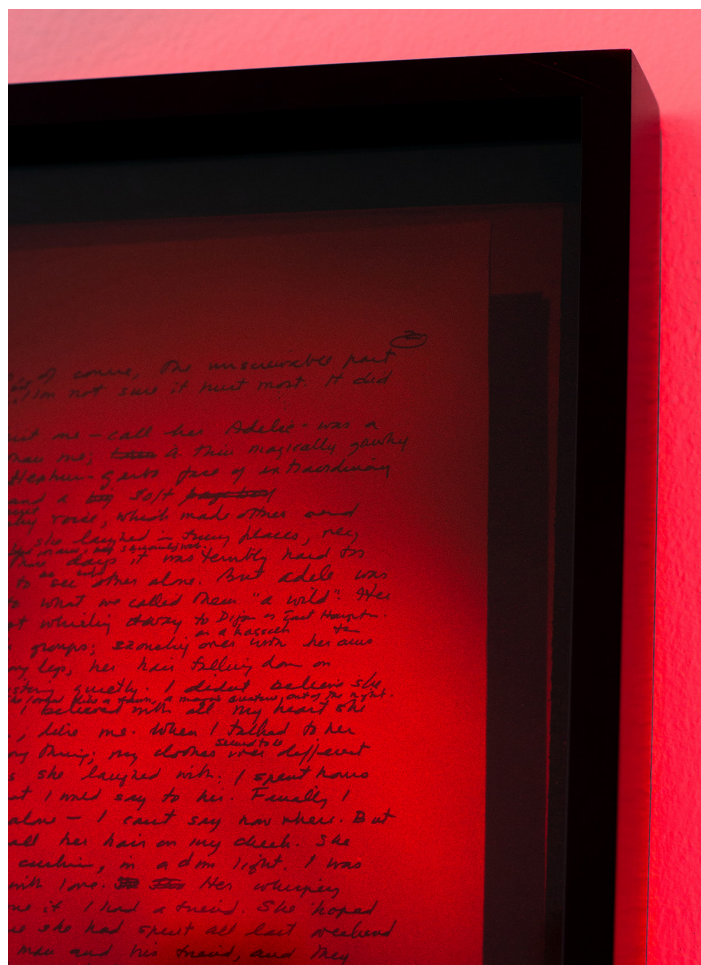
Brittany Nelson, *I wish I had a Dark Sea*, 2021  
silver gelatin print, 130 × 102 cm  
© Brittany Nelson and Patron Gallery



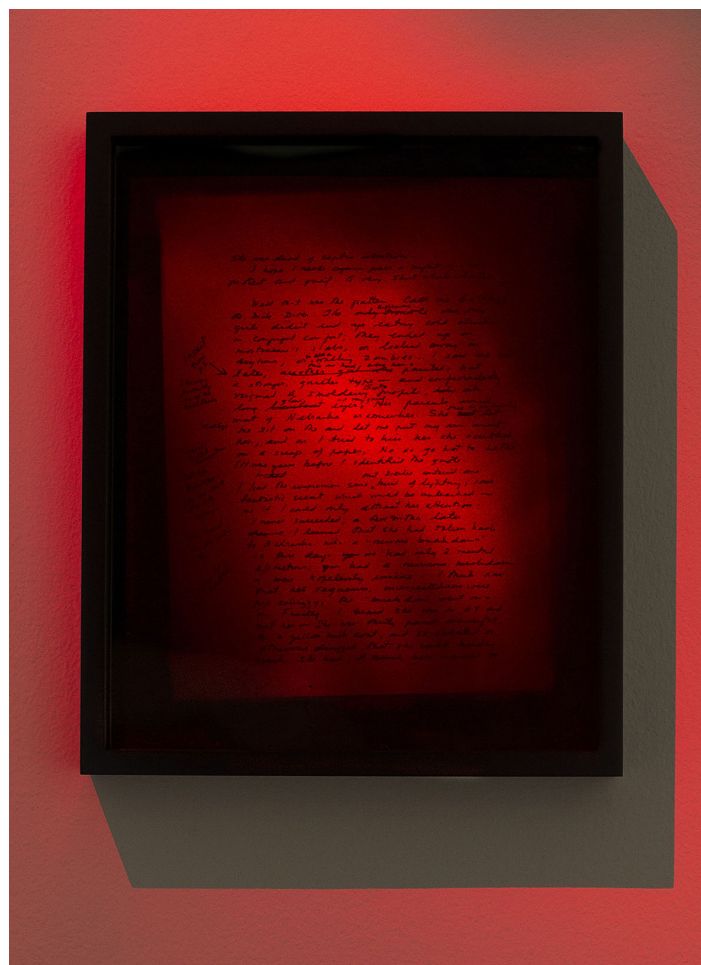
Brittany Nelson, *Mars Clouds 1*, 2021  
silver gelatin print, 30,5 × 25,5 cm  
© Brittany Nelson and Patron Gallery



# Pictures



Brittany Nelson, *Tiptree's Dead Birds*, Pages 2 (detail), 2019  
reflective holograph on glass, 25.4 × 20.3 cm.  
Photograph: Aron Gent  
© Brittany Nelson and Patron Gallery



Brittany Nelson, *Tiptree's Dead Birds*, Pages 3, 2019  
reflective holograph on glass, 25.4 × 20.3 cm.  
Photograph: Aron Gent  
© Brittany Nelson and Patron Gallery

# Pictures



*I can hardly bear when it's over, I can hardly  
bear when it starts, 2022*  
single channel video, 8'06"  
© Brittany Nelson and Patron Gallery

# Exhibition program

## **Press preview**

→ **Friday April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2 – 6 p.m.**

meet the artist (all professionals are welcome and can sign up for an appointment)

## **Opening**

→ **Saturday April 2<sup>nd</sup> from 2 p.m.**

cocktail reception at 5 p.m.

## **Visite fil d'art**

→ **Thursday April 14<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m.**

→ **Thursday May 12<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m.**

thematic visit with a mediator

## **Finissage**

→ **Saturday May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2 – 6 p.m.**

→ **Sunday May 23<sup>rd</sup> from 5 p.m.**

exceptionally open on Sunday May 23<sup>rd</sup>  
in the frame of Mai d'Adèle Festival

## **During the exhibition:**

### **→ Festival Mai d'Adèle**

19th to 22nd of May

exhibitions, events, visits and contemporary art walks. More informations:

[www.adele-lyon.fr](http://www.adele-lyon.fr)

# Publics

### **→ Weekly visit**

Every Saturday, the team is present on site to accompany you in the exhibition.  
Free entrance.

### **→ Group visits**

The CAP offers tailor-made visits with a mediator for groups.  
Reservation needed.

### **Covid-19**

Access to the exhibitions in compliance with the health national protocol regulations.

# Informations

## Exhibition

April 2<sup>nd</sup> — May 22th 2022

## Free entrance

## Opening-hours

Tuesday to friday • 12 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Saturday • 2 to 6 p.m.

and by appointment

## Acces

Espace Léon Blum

rue de la Rochette

69190 Saint-Fons

Tram T4: Lénine - Corsière

Bus 60: Yves Farge - Corsière

Bus 93: La Rochette - Clochettes

Reduced mobility accessibility

# Contacts

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# Web



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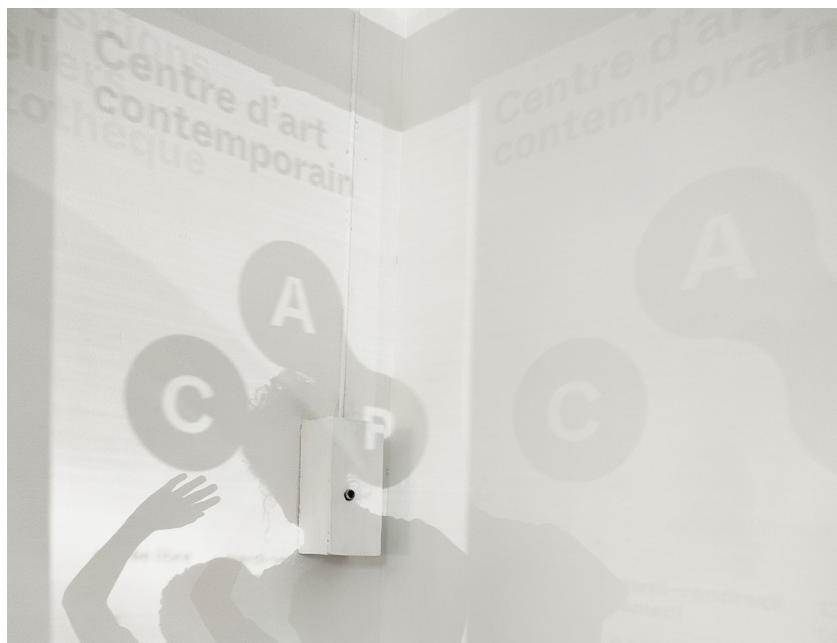
@lecapcentredart



[www.lecap-saintfons.com](http://www.lecap-saintfons.com)



# CAP Contemporary art center



© CAP Saint-Fons, 2021

Since 1986, the CAP Contemporary art center in Saint-Fons (Lyon-France) has a twofold mission of encouraging public interest in contemporary art and supporting artistic creation. Saint-Fons is a city with a rich industrial history and a current geographical, social and economical complexity.

Emerging and established artists from the international as well as from the French art scene are invited for solo or group exhibitions and to develop their projects thanks to our residency program.

A rich educational program and mediation is an important part of the CAP's philosophy.

CAP contemporary art center is a public art venue supported by the City of Saint-Fons. Its activities are supported and funded by the City of Saint-Fons, Région Auvergne-Rhône Alpes and the Ministère de la Culture – DRAC Rhone-Alpes.

  
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**adcle**

**AC//RA**  
art contemporain en Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes